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Articles in Today's Clips

Thursday, August 21, 2008

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Boyfriend goes on trial for baby's death

Thursday, August 21, 2008

By John S. Hausman
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MUSKEGON COUNTY -- Testimony was to begin this morning in the murder trial of Marcus Tulenkun Bolden, accused of causing the death of 1-year-old Houston Mikell Curtis more than four years ago.

Jury selection wrapped up by about 3 p.m. Wednesday, and the prosecution and defense attorney ended the trial's first day with their opening statements to jurors.

Bolden is charged with open murder in the death of Houston Mikell Curtis, the 1-year-old baby of Crystal Bell, whom Bolden had recently begun dating. The boy died of a severe head injury on Feb. 1, 2004, at DeVos Children's Hospital in Grand Rapids. The child was not Bolden's.

Bolden, in jail for another misdemeanor child-abuse conviction, was charged in March after he made statements to police that led to his arrest. Bolden reportedly told police that -- upset by Houston's crying early Jan. 31, 2004, while the mother was in another room of her apartment on Merrill Avenue in Muskegon -- he threw the baby onto a bed. The child bounced and struck the wall, which allegedly caused the skull fracture and brain damage that led to his death less than two days later.

"This case is about the tragic end of a 1-year-old child, Houston Curtis, at the hands of the defendant," said Dale J. Hilson, senior assistant Muskegon County prosecutor.

Hilson laid out the prosecution case that he hopes to prove through testimony of witnesses including medical personnel, police and the baby's mother, as well as evidence including incriminating statements Bolden made to police.

Hilson said he will ask the jurors to convict Bolden of first-degree felony murder -- death caused during the commission of another felony, in this case first-degree child abuse. That would carry a mandatory sentence of life in prison without parole.

Jurors also will have the option of convicting Bolden of second-degree murder, which carries a maximum penalty of life with the chance of parole.

Hilson outlined the sequence of events in the days immediately preceding the baby's injuries and in the years since.

The prosecutor noted that Bell and her mother had taken Houston to a pediatrician's office on Jan. 30 because the child was suffering from a bad cold and had a red swelling on his right temple. But, Hilson said, medical personnel will testify that they saw no sign of injury at that time, concluding the swelling was from an infection related to the cold.

The autopsy later showed the baby died from a skull fracture to the left side of his head, Hilson said.

Hilson also pointed to Bolden's conflicting statements to police, concluding with what appeared to be a confession early this year: The written, initialed answer "Yes" to a detective's written question, "Did you cause this head injury?"

Defense attorney Richard Terrell Taylor countered with a brief, general statement urging jurors to "keep an open mind. Listen to all the testimony" before deciding. "The devil is in the details," Taylor said.

Taylor reminded the jury that the events in question happened more than four years ago. He asserted that Bell hadn't paid attention to her child for several hours until finding him severely injured after she was awakened by a 2 a.m. phone call. He spoke of the youth of the couple at the time -- Bolden 18, Bell 21.

"It will become clear to you, Marcus had nothing to do with this," Taylor said. "He did not cause this child's injuries."

Former Flint teacher suspected of sexual assault married recent graduate who attended district where she previously taught

by Kristin Longley | The Flint Journal
Wednesday August 20, 2008, 9:25 PM

FLINT, Michigan -- The teacher accused of having sex with a 12-year-old student previously married a man who had been a student at Beecher High School when she substitute taught for the district.



/Benton-Wells

Allanah Benton-Wells married her first husband in 1997, a year after he apparently graduated from Beecher High School and two years after she began substitute teaching for the district, according to Genesee County marriage records and her personnel file.

He turned 20 just a few days before their marriage. She was 31.

He was beginning his senior year of high school when Benton-Wells started working for Beecher, according to a yearbook, but her attorney said the pair didn't meet until after he graduated. Attempts to reach him on Wednesday were unsuccessful.

Benton-Wells met the man while she was working at Payless Shoe Source in Flint, said her attorney, Michael B. Haley.

"She never had him as a student," Haley said. "He came into the store where she worked."

Benton-Wells worked at Payless from February 1992 until November 1996,

which overlapped with her substitute teaching, according to records in her Flint schools personnel file which was obtained by The Journal through a Freedom of Information Act request.

Haley said his client substitute taught for many different subjects and grades in the Beecher district. She once filled in for a class that included her future husband's little brother, but never taught her future husband, Haley said.

Former Beecher Superintendent Ira Rutherford, who led the district at the time, said he had no knowledge of Benton-Wells or her marriage in 1997 to a recent graduate.

"I wouldn't have had much to do with substitutes," he said and declined further comment.

Current Beecher Superintendent Jerri Lynn Williams could not be reached for comment.

Benton-Wells continued to work as a substitute teacher in Beecher until at least 1998. She was hired by Flint schools to teach at Williams Elementary in 1999.

Genesee County Prosecutor David Leyton declined to comment Wednesday on Benton-Wells' previous marriage.

His office charged Benton-Wells on Tuesday with two counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct, a felony punishable by up to life in prison.

Investigators say Benton-Wells had sex with a sixth-grader from her Williams Elementary School class on two separate occasions around Halloween 2007 when she was supposed to be tutoring him. She was fired by the Flint school district two weeks ago.

District spokesman Craig Carter has declined to comment on her case.

Thursday, August 21, 2008

Perry will not stand trial for third time

Jennifer Chambers / The Detroit News



PONTIAC -- A kindergarten teacher whose sexual assault conviction was overturned by a judge will not stand trial a third time on charges he raped two students.

Livingston County assistant prosecuting attorney Pamela Maas told an Oakland Circuit Court judge Thursday that there is not enough evidence to proceed with a third trial in the highly controversial case against James Norman Perry.

"The interests of justice are best served" by not moving forward with this case, Maas said.

After the decision and outside of court, Perry was momentarily speechless and initially said he did not know how he felt.

"It is very overwhelming. ... It has been three years, and I am just happy the prosecutor took an objective look at the case and made the right decision," said Perry who was flanked by his father, pastor and two defense lawyers.

Judge Denise Langford Morris had given Maas three months to review evidence in the case and court transcripts from Perry's two prior jury trials before determining whether she could go forward with a third trial on charges that Perry raped two boys in an Oak Park elementary school in 2005.

Maas specifically cited "the numerous inconsistencies that have arisen in the three times that the children have had to testify in court, the inconsistencies between their forensic interviews and their courtroom testimony and the conflicts between the testimony of school personnel and the child witnesses" as why she says it is not possible to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt

Perry, 34, of Ferndale taught at Key Elementary School and was facing up to life in prison in February 2007 after his first trial and conviction on two counts of second-degree criminal sexual conduct involving boys 4 and 5 years old. Perry was originally charged with pulling the two boys out of a lunch line and sexually assaulting them in an empty classroom.

But in a rare move, Morris tossed out the jury's guilty verdict, ordered a second trial and released Perry from jail on bond, a GPS tether and conditions that he avoid contact with children unless their parents were present.

Morris agreed with defense attorneys that new defense witnesses found after the trial might have influenced the jury's decision and that it would be a "miscarriage of justice" not to include their testimony.

His second trial, at which he took the stand and denied the allegations, ended in a hung jury in March.

The matter was passed on to Livingston County after Oakland County Prosecutor David Gorcyca disqualified his office from handling it because of a pending grievance against him.

Gorcyca initially was to make a decision on a third trial. But he was targeted for an attorney grievance probe because of statements he allegedly made to a newspaper editor, in a radio interview and in a press release after Perry's first conviction on the charges. The complaint alleges Gorcyca made statements that could have "had a substantial likelihood" of prejudicing court proceedings.

A jury in the first trial convicted Perry after only five hours of deliberation, although that jury did not hear the testimony of three school employees who said the incident could not have occurred in the special education classroom, which was routinely supervised by adults.

Another new witness claimed to have seen Perry remove boys from the cafeteria line, and an expert in forensic interviewing of children testified that children's memories are often influenced by parents and others.

Perry, who has been on leave from the Oak Park School District, said he does not know whether he will return to teaching. He said he is not bitter or angry at prosecutors who put him on trial twice, but he doubts he can ever reclaim his reputation in the community.

"I prayed to God many times that justice would finally come. I have so many phone calls to make to tell people the good news," Perry said as he walked out of the courthouse.

A call to the Oakland County prosecutor's office for a comment was not returned early Thursday.

You can reach Jennifer Chambers at (248) 647-7402 or jchambers@detnews.com.

Rape charges dropped against former teacher

BY JOHN WISELY AND L.L. BRASIER • FREE PRESS STAFF WRITERS • AUGUST 21, 2008



A former Oak Park kindergarten teacher accused of raping two young boys is a free man today after prosecutors dropped the case against him citing numerous inconsistencies and other factors.

James Perry, 34, of Ferndale, smiled and hugged one of his lawyers, Robyn Frankel, after Oakland County Circuit Judge Denise Langford Morris approved a prosecutor's motion to drop the case.

The decision to drop happened at a hearing that lasted less than a minute and ended a controversial case that has lasted almost three years. Livingston County Assistant Prosecutor Pamela Maas, who took over the case after Oakland County Prosecutor David Gorcyca was charged with professional misconduct for his handling of the case, asked for the case to be dropped in "the interests of justice."

"The decision of whether to further pursue prosecution of this case is made in light of the totality of the facts and circumstances," Maas said in a packed courtroom. "The evidence as it exists after the conclusion of two jury trials indicates that it is not possible to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt."

Maas cited numerous inconsistencies between the testimony of the two children and conflicts between their accounts and those offered by school employees.

Langford Morris, who made the controversial decision to overturn a 2006 guilty verdict against Perry, smiled when Maas asked her to drop the case. Perry's other lawyer, Mitchell Ribitwer, didn't object.

"Somehow, I didn't think you would," Langford Morris said, as a group of Perry supporters in the front row burst into applause.

The case against Perry was shaky from the start. The first boy, who was 5 at the time, told investigators that Perry raped him on his first day of school in October 2005. The boy had only been in the building for three hours when he made the claim. He later said that a 4-year-old classmate was assaulted with him. But when investigators talked to that boy, he denied any attack.

Oakland County prosecutors declined to charge in the case but reopened it four months later after a management shakeup at the prosecutor's office.

When they reinterviewed the second boy and his mother, his mother told them that her son had acknowledged an attack a few months after denying it to investigators. Prosecutors then charged Perry with raping the two boys and an Oakland County jury convicted him in September 2006.

But Perry's lawyers almost immediately sought a new trial, noting that investigators never interviewed a teacher and others who worked in the special education classroom where the boys said the attacks happened.

Langford Morris concluded their testimony could have changed the outcome of the case and ordered a new trial. Prosecutors unsuccessfully appealed the judge's decision and Perry went to trial again earlier this year.

The special education teacher and several aides testified at that trial that the classroom was full of students and others throughout the day because some special education children ate lunch at their desks to avoid the crowded cafeteria. That trial ended in a hung jury with 11 jurors seeking acquittal and one juror, who acknowledged living around the corner from Perry's Ferndale home, insisting that Perry was guilty.

“If Jim Perry was convicted on these allegations we should all be afraid,” Frankel said.

Perry appeared stunned by the news that he was a free man. He spent almost six months in the Oakland County Jail in late 2006 and early 2007 awaiting word on whether he was entitled to a new trial. He’s on leave from his teaching job, but it’s unclear if he will ever enter a classroom again.

Even free from jail, Perry has been unable to stay in his own home. Oakland County prosecutors argued that Perry posed a threat to children at Ferndale Middle School, which abuts his home.

“It’s been almost three years and I’m just glad the Livingston County prosecutor took an objective look at this and made the right decision,” Perry said after leaving the courtroom.

Perry isn’t the only one who has paid a price in the case. Gorcyca landed himself in trouble with the Michigan Attorney Grievance Commission after he called Perry a freak and sent out a news release questioning why Perry wouldn’t take a polygraph examination, the results of which are usually not admissible in Michigan courts.

At one point, Assistant Prosecutor Andrea Dean tried to argue that movies found in Perry’s home, like “Star Wars,” the “Harry Potter” films and “Little House on the Prairie,” constituted “non-erotic pornography.” Langford Morris ruled the videos irrelevant and refused to let the jury hear that argument.

The commission accused Gorcyca of professional misconduct. That case is pending before the Attorney Discipline Board, which hears ethics cases against lawyers.

The complaint was filed after Perry's second trial ended in a hung jury and as a result, Gorcyca turned over the decision on whether to seek a third trial over to Livingston County to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest.

Gorcyca did not respond this morning to an e-mail seeking comment.

Come back to freep.com for updates.

MACOMB COUNTY

Man responsible for '94 rape can't be charged However, he faces other charges

BY KIM NORTH SHINE • FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER • AUGUST 21, 2008



Even though his DNA was connected to three pieces of evidence in a 1994 rape and armed robbery that occurred in Clinton Township and sent the wrong person to prison for nine years, the man who police say got away with the crime for 14 years still will not face charges for it because of a statute of limitations.

However, at a news conference held this morning at the township's police department, Macomb County Prosecutor Eric Smith said the man, who has committed other crimes, including sexual assault against children, will be charged in other cases.

Those charges, Smith said, will be compiled so they could put the man away for many years, if not for life.

Smith said Craig Gonser, 40, formerly of Warren and Clinton Township and in custody in Cheboygan County since February following a domestic dispute with his ex-wife, will be brought to Macomb County by Sterling Heights police today or Friday.

Gonser, who has a long history of criminal offenses, will face charges of distributing pornographic material to a minor, aggravated indecent exposure and indecent exposure. The charges stem from a 2004 crime against a child in Sterling Heights.

The allegations came to light as Sterling Heights Police, as well as other police agencies, were looking into Gonser's past. Their investigation started in May, when Michigan State Police matched his DNA to a blindfold used on the rape victim, a rag used as a gag and on a cigarette butt at the crime scene.

Kenneth Wyniemko, 57, of Rochester Hills served time for the hours-long rape that occurred in the middle of the night. He was released in 2003 after the Innocence Project at Cooley Law School took on the case and proved to a Macomb County judge that Wyniemko could not have committed the crime.

Though Wyniemko was freed and in 2005 won a \$3.7-million federal lawsuit against the Clinton Township Police Department, he has never felt cleared.

"I feel this is one more step toward showing people I did not do this terrible thing," he said.

Wyniemko, who met with Smith on Wednesday, attended the news conference.

Smith described Wyniemko as level-headed and forgiving for all that had happened to him.

Smith characterized the case as the "highest-profile unsolved crime in ... Macomb County history" and said it's disappointing that Gonser won't be charged with the rape against the 28-year-old woman who now lives in Indiana. However, he said he is satisfied that "he won't be on the streets."

His history, Smith said, shows "he is a danger to society." *Contact **KIM NORTH SHINE** at 313-223-4557 or kshine@freepress.com.*

Man presumed drown while trying to help his kids

Thursday, August 21, 2008

By Lisa Medendorp
lmedendorp@muskegonchronicle.com

A dune scooter sped across the Silver Lake sand dunes Wednesday evening as police boats and divers searched for a missing Detroit-area father presumed to have drowned.

Despite the use of specialized sonar equipment, searchers could not locate 41-year-old Kit Kurt Knibbe of Warren. The search effort was called off about midnight and was to resume this morning.

The victim and his stepson, 18, were in a boat pulling a tube on the lake when Knibbe's two sons riding on the tube -- ages 10 and 3 -- were suddenly thrown off, according to Oceana County Undersheriff Robert Farber.

The young children were wearing life jackets, but the father was not. They were yelling for help, and "he dove into the water to go to help them," Farber said.

Knibbe began to struggle in the water, then went down. The stepson, who wore a life jacket, jumped into the water carrying a second jacket, said Sheriff's Lt. Tim Priese.

But the teen found no sign of his stepfather. The teen and the young children were in the water for about 15-20 minutes yelling for help when a passing boater pulled them from the water and took them to shore.

Police and firefighters were dispatched at 4:16 p.m. and began to search a wide area of the lake toward the west end.

A request later was made to the Norton Shores Fire Department for its side-scan sonar.

The specialized equipment and the Norton Shores Underwater Recovery Team arrived just before 8 p.m. As the Oceana County Dive Team and State Police continued their search pattern, the sonar equipment was loaded aboard a pontoon boat, which then joined the effort.

While divers on a tow bar can cover a path about 5-feet wide, the side-scan sonar can cover the area of a football field in less than a minute.

The 4-foot long, side-scan sonar tow fish, which is torpedo-shaped, is submerged in the water and is towed behind the boat. The tow fish sends out a signal that reflects off objects on the lake bottom back to the tow fish and then to a computer aboard the boat.

It's like a sophisticated fish finder, but instead of getting echoes, operators can see a defined object. Divers then go down to check the discovery.

As darkness fell Wednesday, the hope was that the side-scan sonar would shorten the grim wait for the family.

Also responding to the scene were the Hart Fire Department and Oceana EMS.

The drowning in Silver Lake was the second this month.

On Aug. 9, a 25-year-old man from Wayne County's Brownstown Township drowned during a family outing. Awais Ahmed, who couldn't swim, was wading along the dunes' shoreline when he slipped off a dropoff into about 12 feet of water. Other family members were unable to rescue him.

Thursday, August 21, 2008

Commentary

Overhaul state's publicly funded child care

Judy Samelson and Jack Kresnak

In the wake of two damaging audits of Michigan's child day care system, some parents may be worrying about their own child care choices, and taxpayers may be questioning the ability of the state to manage scarce resources.

Clearly mistakes were made that were acknowledged by the Department of Human Services and were being addressed before the audits' release.

No one will disagree with the need to improve oversight. The problem is that we cannot afford to stop there.

For most families, child care is an economic necessity. Declining real wages have forced more families to rely on two incomes and have further stretched the budgets of many single parents. The state's lowest income children are the most vulnerable.

The demand for publicly subsidized child care exploded when Michigan reformed its welfare system in the mid-1990s by requiring recipients of income assistance to work. More attention was paid to getting people to work than the safety and well-being of children.

The result: low subsidies that fueled rapid growth in the number of parents whose only child care option was to place their children with unregulated relatives or neighbors. At the same time, there were dramatic reductions in the number of DHS staff to monitor licensed care.

Now that the audits have told us what we already knew -- this system is designed to fail -- what do we do?

We've got to do better with what we've got. The DHS -- with the support of the Michigan Legislature -- is examining a bipartisan legislative package that would establish a new safety checklist, limit the number of children under the care of day care aides, enhance training requirements and require criminal background checks before providers can be paid.

But let's be realistic. State budget cuts have resulted in a 25 percent reduction to DHS staff since 2002. That has to stop.

While a good start, these bills tweak a poorly designed system that doesn't address the need to prepare children for the future or helping working parents. What is needed is a complete overhaul of publicly supported child care, and it will take the coordinated efforts of policymakers, communities, child care providers, parents and guardians to get there.

Judy Samelson is chief executive of the Early Childhood Investment Corporation, and Jack Kresnak is president and chief executive of Michigan's Children in Lansing. E-mail letters to letters@detnews.com.



August 21, 2008

Helping homeless veterans

Robert Warner

The Enquirer

President Bush's homelessness czar visited Battle Creek on Wednesday to announce a \$125,000 federal grant to pay for apartments for some of the area's homeless military veterans.

Philip Mangano, executive director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, also spoke about efforts nationally and locally to abolish homelessness.

Mangano said 35 local vets will get vouchers to rent existing apartments under a \$74 million program that is expected to house 10,000 homeless veterans across the country.

Noting 143,000 veterans are out on the streets, Mangano said, "We all can agree that's a national disgrace."

Mangano said the Department of Housing and Urban Development is providing the vouchers through the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing program.

"The VA is the entity that will decide" who gets the vouchers, said Lee Talmage, director of the Battle Creek Housing Commission.

"They will send their veterans to us," Talmage said. "We will give them a voucher that they can take out into the community."

Talmage also is chairman of the Homeless Coalition of Greater Battle Creek and Calhoun County.

"These 35 units will come online rapidly and 35 people who are now presently homeless in Battle Creek who have served their country — their homelessness will come to an end," Mangano said.

In addition, Summit Pointe will cover security deposits for the apartments, said Karen Roebuck, housing coordinator for the local social services provider.

As for the local plan to end homelessness in 10 years, Mangano was encouraging, said Denise Washington, communications chairwoman for the Homeless Coalition.

"We're on the right track," Washington said. "For me, for him to mention that you can't separate business from the situation — it was a breath of fresh air."

"I think it's absolutely incredible," said Marlene Lawrence, head of the Share Center, which provides services to the homeless, and a coalition member.

"The comments made today, the understanding today, the context given today is gonna move us forward and get a momentum that we haven't had," Lawrence said.

Also Wednesday, Battle Creek Mayor Mark Behnke became the 386th government leader to sign a "statement of principles and actions," vowing to work together with state and federal agencies to fight homelessness.

Mangano said that fight should be fought with minds open to new solutions and "with an abolitionist intent."

"And what city should have more of an abolitionist intent than the city that has, of course, the statue of Sojourner Truth in its midst," Mangano said.

He pointed to the economic toll of homelessness: A University of California at San Diego study showed the cost of providing emergency room health care, law enforcement and other services for 15 street people for 18 months ran to \$200,000 per person. A San Diego official said it would have been cheaper to put them up in ocean-view condominiums.

Mangano said "There are engagement programs that literally go out with a key, and they say to homeless people who have resisted everything else and have been out on the streets for 5, 10 or 15 years, in places like New York and St. Louis and San Francisco: 'If you come with me, this key opens an apartment, and you can be living in it this afternoon.'"

Out of 80 people in St. Louis offered housing in that manner, 76 now are living in the apartments, Mangano said.

"Shockingly, it works," he said. "Homeless people do go in if you offer them a place to live."

Robert Warner can be reached at 966-0674 or rwarn@battlecr.gannett.com.



One Stop Housing Resource Center provides services for the homeless

Posted by Ashley A. Smith | The Flint Journal August 20, 2008 21:47PM

FLINT, Michigan -- For many of the homeless in Genesee County being able to get help from different agencies all over town can be difficult.

Agencies and organizations in the area are hoping to alleviate the problem by opening the One Stop Housing Resource Center Thursday.

The center, 303 Water St., Suite 204, in Flint is designed to be a full-service destination for people who are homeless or at risk for becoming homeless to receive aid from various agencies including the Department of Human Services, Health Access, Shelter of Flint and Legal Services of Eastern Michigan.

"If you found yourself homeless tomorrow you wouldn't know where to go or how to start," said Frank Woods, project coordinator for One Stop Housing Resource Center. "We created one single point of entry for people to get services."

At One Stop Housing Resource Center, people will have the opportunity to wash clothes and look for employment while receiving help from health agencies, shelters, food banks and government aid, Woods said.

The center defines near homelessness as someone who received an eviction notice. Homelessness also includes those who don't have their own permanent residence.

At any given time there can be about 300 sheltered people utilizing various agency services, said Michele Wildman, director of partnership for Metro Housing Partnership.

"There are places people sleep like abandoned buildings, parks and campgrounds," Wildman said. "We'll go to those places and talk to folks to see what their living arrangement is and what caused them to no longer have an affordable residence."

There are many reasons people are homeless, from loss of employment to domestic violence, Wildman said.

"We wanted a place where people could go when they need transportation to get services and a place to wash their clothes and use the bathroom," said Pam Nelson, a community development specialist for United Way of Genesee County. "At 8 a.m. they're out the door at most shelters. We wanted a place for people to go in cold weather and hot weather where they can be treated with respect and dignity."

The housing resource center operates with a 1-year \$125,000 grant from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority's Housing First Initiative, Woods said.

Flint Journal extras

One Stop Housing Resource Center:

- Operations: 8 a.m.- 5 p.m. Mondays and Thursdays
- In-house Agencies: Flint Odyssey Home, Flint STRIVE, Genesee County Community Action Resource Development, Genesee County Community Mental Health, Genesee County Youth Development Corporation/REACH, Genesys West Flint Health Center, Hamilton Community Health Network, Health Access, Intake Assessment and Referral Center, Legal Services of Eastern Michigan, Michigan Department of Human Services, North End Soup Kitchen, Shelter of Flint, The Resource Center

Wildman said the next homeless count Metro Housing Partnership performs will be Tuesday for the new year. The housing resource center does not have income requirements, although some specific programs offered through it sometimes do.

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Joseph Wheeler ordered to stand trial in Portage heroin overdose death

Posted by [efinnert](#) August 20, 2008 13:55PM

PORTAGE -- A man charged in the heroin-overdose death of 18-year-old Amy Bousfield was ordered Wednesday to stand trial.

Joseph Anthony Wheeler, 21, of Waterford, is charged with delivery of a controlled substance resulting in death. Police allege he helped obtain the heroin used by Bousfield, of Portage, and 17-year-old Carrie Anne Wickham on June 27.

Bousfield, who had just graduated from Portage Central High School, died the next day.

Wheeler waived his right to a preliminary examination, scheduled for Wednesday, on the evidence against him. District Court Judge Robert C. Kropf then bound the case over to Kalamazoo County Circuit Court circuit court for trial, a court official said.

The preliminary examination for Wickham, of Portage, is scheduled for Aug. 27. She also has been charged with delivery of a controlled substance resulting in death. The felony is punishable by up to life in prison.

Categories: [Breaking News](#), [Crime](#)

Comments

Footer

In slow economy, Kalamazoo-area resale shops see rise in back-to-school sales

Posted by [aholcomb](#) August 21, 2008 08:40AM



John A. Lacko | Special to Kalamazoo Gazette
Lisa Taylor of Marshall helps son Zach, 14, as they shop for back to school clothes at the 360 Consignment Shop on West Main Saturday afternoon.

VICKSBURG -- Resale and consignment shops may be becoming the not-often-mentioned ace in the hole for cash-strapped families facing major back-to-school needs.

"I have some people who do it because they have big families and have no choice," Lisa Deming, owner of Around & Around Children's Consignment And Gifts store in Vicksburg, said of people shopping more often at consignment shops.

Although she offered no supporting sales numbers, she said the past couple of weeks have been busier for her as parents begin to outfit their school-age children. And she said she's seeing people she never thought she'd see.

"Even friends of mine who wouldn't be caught dead in a place like this because it's not good enough for them are coming in," Deming said.

Families who have never set spending limits on back-to-school shopping are budgeting this year because of the sour economy and high gas prices.

"I'm spending less because I have less money to spend because of what I pay for gas and rent," said Cori Ross, 20, a psychology major at Kalamazoo Valley Community College.

Ross shopped recently for clothes at [Plato's Closet](#), a resale and consignment shop on South Westnedge Avenue in Portage. Teens and young adults are key customers.

"Everybody's geared up for back-to-school shopping," manager Sara Holm said. "Jeans and zip-up hoodies are always popular."

Back-to-school resources

- [Budget-minded: Families plan modest back-to-school spending this year](#)
- [Three keys to keeping preschool-age children healthy](#)
- [The Education Community](#)
- [Back to School 2008](#)



John A. Lacko | Special to Kalamazoo

GazetteCaleb McAllister, 14, of Marshall tries on some jeans at the 360 Consignment Shop on West Main Saturday afternoon.

Adele Meyers, executive director of the [National Association of Resale & Thrift Shops](#), said economic downturns present opportunities for resale shops to attract new customers.

"Resale attracts a new demographic of both suppliers and customers during difficult economic times," Meyers said.

Evie Hall, owner of Home Again Consignments in Vicksburg, said parents typically will visit her store, which sells everything from kitchen utensils and furniture to jewelry and books, and discover jeans and other clothing. They leave, she said, then bring their teenagers back.

"I get some kids who are going off to college, and they buy inexpensive furniture like couches, tables and chairs," Hall said.

In addition to children's clothing, Deming said, she carries used sports equipment for soccer and football.

"As soon as one parent goes to a Rocket Football practice and says I (Deming) have football gear, it will all be gone," she said. "Parents can't afford to pay \$80 for kids to play Rocket Football."

Categories: [Business](#), [Feature](#), [Top Photos](#)

Comments

Footer

Prescription drugs cost less for members of the public who have little or no coverage

By DAVID WARFIELD
Herald-Palladium Staff Writer

August 21, 2008

BENTON HARBOR — United Way of Southwest Michigan is reporting a better response than anticipated for its FamilyWize prescription drug discount program, a national program that is bringing savings to the uninsured in Southwest Michigan.

“This is really cool,” Community Impact Director Joann McMahon said Wednesday. “When we got the most updated numbers ... there were 1,066 claims in Berrien County as of this afternoon.”

McMahon said cardholders in Berrien County are saving an average of 28 percent off the normal price of prescription drugs.

The FamilyWize card brings discounts on prescriptions for people with little or no drug coverage. For cardholders with existing coverage, it works for drugs not included in their benefit plans.

The United Way of Southwest Michigan, which covers Berrien and Cass counties, began rolling out and promoting the program June 18, supplying stacks of the cards to participating pharmacies.

In addition, United Way is making the card available at each of its partner agencies in Southwest Michigan.

The program has met a far more limited reception in Cass County, McMahon said.

There were three claims in July and six so far in August.

“Cass is still really being rolled out,” she said.

The FamilyWize program is not funded by the United Way. It is the more than 53,000 pharmacies nationwide that are making the savings available by accepting prices for the drugs that are close to the prices offered to large insurance companies and employers. The rest of the program costs are covered by in-kind donations from sponsors.

There are no age, income or residency restrictions under FamilyWize. No personal information is collected, so there is no registration, activation,

paperwork or enrollment, a United Way press release said.

“I’m sold on them,” said Terri Kirchoff, a United Way employee who has been using the cards for her elderly mother. “My mother is a senior who never signed up for the Medicaid plan that includes drug coverage.”

Kirchoff said she paid \$26.27 for what originally was a \$48.92 prescription at Meijer in Benton Township. “I asked them if they had the FamilyWize cards because we had personally delivered them to other pharmacies,” Kirchoff said.

The card brings savings on less expensive drugs, like the prescription Kirchoff filled at Van’s Pharmacy in St. Joseph.

“It was originally about \$12. ... They took 99 cents off,” she said “I was impressed by that.”

Susan Yore, a pharmacy technician at Meijer, called the program “a great success,” saying the cards have saved some customers as much \$40 to \$50 per prescription.

One elderly couple with no insurance saved \$144.50 in one purchase, she said.

Janet Hagar of Benton Harbor said her 91-year-old father was cut off from his Blue Cross/Blue Shield when a form that was supposed to be filled out once a year was never received in the mail.

Then she found out that he could not get enrolled in a Medicaid plan until November.

In the meantime, the FamilyWize card from Meijer is getting them through. Hagar said she filled two 60-day prescriptions and a 30-day prescription, which together would have cost around \$234. With the card it was about \$137.

“If it wouldn’t have been for Susan (Yore), I wouldn’t have known about it,” Hagar said. “I called her on the phone to get the prices ... and she said ‘I’m gonna give you this little card.’” There are 550 other United Way chapters nationwide promoting the FamilyWize program. According to national United Way estimates, more than 4 million cards have been distributed, representing \$7 million in savings for users. The goal is \$100 million in savings over the next five years.

Information is available at www.familywize.org. A prescription card can be printed directly from the Web site.

More information is available from the United Way of Southwest Michigan at www.uwsm.org.

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John Madill / H-P staff

Anna Murphy, president of the United Way of Southwest Michigan, holds up a pair of FamilyWize prescription drug discount cards. The cards are available at many local pharmacies and through local social service agencies to help reduce the cost of prescription drugs for those who are uninsured or underinsured.